

Dance: Jim Self Performs at the Kitchen

By JACK ANDERSON

JIM SELF was choreographically ingenious enough to make each of the three works that Jim Self and Dancers presented Saturday night at the Kitchen seem to occur in an entirely different world.

The world that was most fascinating to enter was that of "New Zuyder Zee," a collaboratively created production involving movement, music and dialogue devised by Mr. Self, Richard Elovich, Lauren Stringer, A. Leroy and the dancers. At first, one appeared to be witnessing a family gathering. And so one was. But it soon became clear that it was taking place in a prison.

The dancers started to reminisce about childhood and their movements recalled childhood games. They took photos of one another, as if to have mementoes for a scrapbook. Gradually, their actions indicated that they were growing older and they became gawky young adults trying out the latest social dance fads. Increasingly agitated choreography accompanied tales about political demonstrations. Finally, it was revealed that these children had grown up to be terrorists.

"New Zuyder Zee" took its title from a Dutch nursery rhyme about how land can be both reclaimed from and submerged by the sea. And the events in the piece could easily serve as examples of the mysterious ways people can be carried away on the tides of history.

The other dances took place in other worlds. As Mr. Self and Mr. Elovich recited a text about a man's love affair with a woman named Lucy in "Look Out," they gestured in a brisk, crisp, cut-and-dried fashion. Mr. Self might have been doing exercises. Mr. Elovich simply looked ridiculous, because he wore mittens shaped like fish. And their gestures made the love story sound banal.

In "No Memory," dancers who pranced like malicious elves guided the destinies of lovers to a taped score by Scott Johnson that combined outbursts of instrumental sounds with babbling voices. Whereas "Look Out" was deliberately commonplace, "No Memory" was wry and whimsical. But the people who inhabited the worlds of these dances were nowhere near as interesting as the idealists who went astray in "New Zuyder Zee."

Weekend makes Friday even better